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50¢

PROFIT SYSTEM WREAKS HAVOC CAPITALIST MELTDOWN

Workers, oppressed to pay billions to bail out Wall Street

By Fred Goldstein

Sept. 17—With the \$85-billion government bailout of insurance giant AIG, the Federal Reserve Board and the Treasury Department have made another desperate attempt to shore up a collapsing global financial structure.

This latest attempt to rescue a huge capitalist financial firm comes on top of the \$200-billion-plus bailout of the two largest mortgage banks in the world, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, just 10 days ago.

Secret deals stick workers with the bill

President of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Timothy Geithner and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson have been huddled in round-the-clock meetings, hammering out deals. It has been done in secrecy, behind the backs of the workers and the middle class, who will get stuck with the bill. They have been working out these deals with the same loan sharks of high finance whose orgies of speculation, gambling and deception in pursuit of profit led to the crisis in the first place.

Wall Street's speculative binge has led to a truly formidable world crisis.

Over the last three days, AIG, the largest insurance company in the world with a TRILLION dollars in assets, came within hours of bankruptcy.

Lehman Brothers, a prestigious, 158-year-old investment bank with \$639 billion in assets and \$613 billion in debts, went under in the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history.

Merrill Lynch, another pillar of investment banking with another TRILLION dollars in assets, averted bankruptcy only after being swallowed up by Bank of America.

Washington Mutual, the largest savings and loan in

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the U.S., had its bond rating reduced to junk and is on the ropes.

As the bankruptcy crisis was developing on Thursday, Sept. 11, Paulson told the bankers that the government was through stepping in and that they would have to solve the problem among themselves. That was last week. Now the U.S. government has put up another \$85 billion to bail out the banks. It is a sign of crisis and weakness.

While the bailout of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac had given relief to the holders of trillions of dollars of debt owed them by the two mortgage banks, it also put an enormous strain on the financial system and was another sign of profound weakness and fragility. Further bailouts were ruled out, the government said. It was drawing a "line in the sand."

But Paulson's and Geithner's declarations made no impact on the bankers. They all pursued their own immediate interests and stonewalled their own government. In the end, while Washington let Lehman Brothers fail, AIG was another story. The Federal Reserve Board and the Treasury made a humiliating about-face and stepped in at the last minute, "fearing a financial crisis worldwide." (New York Times, Sept. 17)

The Fed bailout of AIG is instructive about the depth of the crisis. AIG is not even a bank. It is not regulated by the federal government. The Fed had to use emergency powers to intervene, which it deemed necessary not only because AIG issues insurance policies to millions of individuals and commercial enterprises but because it also has insured over \$400 billion in mortgage-backed secu-

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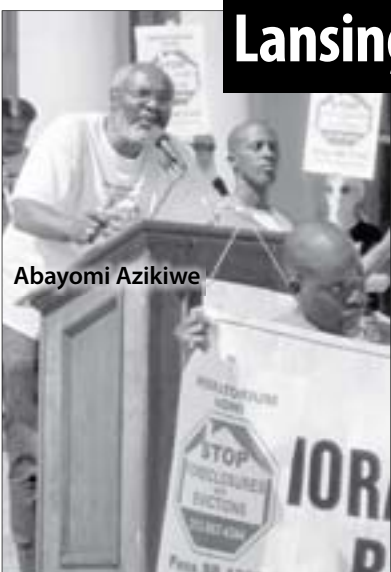
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Lansing, Mich. protest: 'Moratorium now! No evictions!'



Abayomi Azikiwe



Larry Holmes



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Streaming on to the state capitol grounds in Lansing on the morning of Sept. 17, hundreds from across the state of Michigan and beyond demanded passage of SB 1306, a bill that would enact a two-year moratorium on foreclosures. Demanding "Moratorium Now!" and "Bail out the people not the banks," protesters held a spirited march, rally and people's public hearing detailing both the devastation of foreclosures and the people's will to keep fighting for a moratorium.

— Bryan G. Pfeifer

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WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LABASH AND ALAN POLLOCK

Mumia Abu-Jamal film shown in U.S.

An interview with Livia Giuggioli Firth

The following edited and excerpted interview was written by Hans Bennett, a member of Journalists for Mumia (www.Abu-Jamal-News.com). Read the entire interview at <http://insubordination.blogspot.com/2008/09/interview-new-british-film-about-mumia.html>. Go to www.millions4mumia.org to read an important Sept. 12 legal update on Abu-Jamal's case.

For the first time since its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival last January, "In Prison My Whole Life" will be shown to a U.S. audience. This new film about the internationally renowned death-row journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal was shown at the Urbanworld Film Festival along with two other screenings in New York City earlier in September. The film is also being shown at the Critical Resistance Conference in Oakland, Calif., on Sept. 26.

This British documentary premiered at the prestigious London Film Festival and at Rome's International Film Festival on Oct. 25, 2007, at which point I interviewed William Francome, who is a central character in the film. The film's trailer begins with Francome explaining that he's "been aware of Mumia for as long as I can remember. That's because he was arrested on the night I was born for the murder of a Philadelphia police officer. As my mom would often remind me, every birthday I had has been another year that Mumia has spent in prison. ... I am going on a journey to find out about the man who has been in prison my whole life."

With the acclaimed British actor Colin Firth as an executive producer, "In Prison My Whole Life" is directed by Marc Evans and produced by Livia Giuggioli Firth and Nick Goodwin Self. The film has interviews with Alice Walker, Angela Davis, Noam Chomsky, Amy Goodman, Ramona Africa, and musicians Mos Def, Snoop Dogg and Steve Earle.

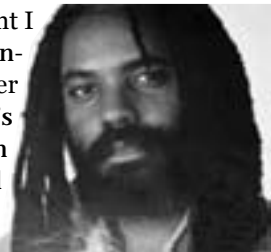
Amnesty International concluded in a previous report that Abu-Jamal's original 1982 trial, where he was convicted of fatally shooting Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner and sentenced to death, was unfair. Amnesty International is supporting "In Prison" as part of its international campaign to abolish the death penalty. Amnesty International U.K. Director Kate Allen says, "It's shocking that the U.S. justice system has repeatedly failed to address the appalling violation of Mumia Abu-Jamal's fundamental fair trial rights."

In the 2007 interview, Francome disclosed that the film will prominently feature the startling Dec. 9, 1981, crime scene photos that were recently discovered by

German author Michael Schiffmann and are published in his new book.

"In Prison" also features an interview with Abu-Jamal's brother Billy Cook, who was at the scene on Dec. 9, 1981, after Officer Faulkner pulled his car over. The first time he has ever been interviewed on camera, Cook denies the accusation that he struck Faulkner in his face, by which he allegedly instigated the undisputed beating given to him by Faulkner. Cook shows "In Prison"'s interviewers the scars he still has on his head today.

Cook says: "They arrested me for assaulting him, but I never laid a hand on him. I was only trying to protect myself. I never hit him. I never hit him." Cook says that right before he was beaten bloody with the police flashlight, Faulkner "was kind of vulgar and nasty. And if I remember correctly he threw a slur in. ... 'N——r get back in the car.'"



Hans Bennett: When did you first hear of Mumia Abu-Jamal?

Livia Giuggioli Firth: A couple of years ago, at a dinner party at some friends' house, I met William Francome and we started to chat (as you do at parties!). He told me he just finished college and wanted to make a documentary about Mumia. I'd never heard of him so

he explained to me who he was. When I got home and googled him ... it was like opening Pandora's box! That was enough to say: we need to dig into this!

HB: What was it like making the film? What role did you play as a producer?

LGF: Marc Evans, the director, is the one who did the film. I produced it—which means my role has been the ball breaker! But it was very interesting to start the "Mumia quest" from scratch and with folks who had never heard of him. Apart from William, none of us (Marc the director, Colin, Nick and I who produced it, Mags the editor and so on for the whole crew) had any idea of the implications in Mumia's case.

If you detach everything from this "figure" constructed by both Mumia's supporters and detractors, you just find a man who has been a victim of politics more than anything else. This was what really fascinated us all when we approached the subject, and this is why Marc Evans wanted to contextualize Mumia's case within the African-American political story. If you do not put Mumia in context—you cannot understand this story.

Because the whole scenario around Dec. 9, 1981, was so complicated, distorted and messed up, we decided to go to Amnesty International—an organization recognized worldwide for being completely objective and impartial—and ask for their guidance. They published a book in 2000 about Mumia's case and concluded that it is impossible to know whether this man is guilty or not because the trial was in violation of international law—a completely unfair trial.

HB: After researching this case, what are 3 facts that you consider most striking regarding the need for a new trial?

LGF: There are so many compelling things about this case that overcome any and all assaults from those who refuse to accept that the core issue here is an unfair trial. Having said this, some examples are: First, there was no real forensic evidence presented in court. They never officially tested Mumia's hands for traces of gunpowder, never officially found the bullet shot through Faulkner's

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DAY of MOURNING

NOV. 27

The 39th annual Day of Mourning

will be held on "Thanksgiving" Thursday, Nov. 27

at 12 noon on Cole's Hill in Plymouth, Mass.

A dinner/social will follow a march and rally.

The event is being sponsored by

United American Indians of New England.

For more updates, go to www.uaine.org.

For New York transportation, call the International Action Center at 212-633-6646. □

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Struggle against executions continues

Innocence ignored in Troy Davis case

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

In a shocking disregard for justice, the Georgia Pardons and Parole Board refused to stop the execution of Troy Anthony Davis, scheduled for Sept. 23.

On Sept. 12, the five-member board heard voluminous evidence supporting Davis' claim of innocence in the 1989 killing of a white off-duty policeman, Mark Allen McPhail, in a Savannah Burger King parking lot. Davis is African American.

Despite previously stating that no execution would be allowed to take place in Georgia "unless and until its members are convinced that there is no doubt as to the guilt of the accused," within less than 30 minutes of the completion of the clemency hearing, the board issued a short press release announcing its decision without comment.

Davis' lawyers and family were stunned by the failure of the board members to thoroughly look at the mountain of documents substantiating Davis' innocence. Several of the board members are former Georgia Bureau of Investigation officials

The Davis case has raised international concern about the arbitrary, capricious and biased use of the death penalty in the U.S. More than 200,000 signatures have been collected on petitions. Hundreds of clergy including the pope have registered

their opposition to Davis' death sentence.

At the 1991 trial, Chatham County prosecutors offered no physical evidence connecting the then 21-year-old Troy Davis to the shooting. The murder weapon was never found; there was no DNA, fingerprints or any other forensic evidence. Troy became a suspect based on the word of Sylvester "Redd" Coles, who admits to being present at the scene. Coles had a prior police record. The Savannah jury heard from eight other witnesses who gave inconsistent accounts implicating Troy.

Seven of these eyewitnesses have since signed sworn affidavits claiming that their testimony was false, with some claiming police coercion and intimidation. The remaining trial witness said in 1989 he could not identify the shooter but two years later in court positively identified Troy.

Additionally, nine individuals who were not called to testify at the trial have since provided sworn statements pointing to Sylvester "Redd" Coles as the assailant.

Davis, who has always claimed innocence, has been repeatedly denied a new trial or even a legal hearing where the recantations and the new witness statements could be examined. In March 2008, the Georgia Supreme Court voted 4-3 against reopening his case despite strenuous objections from three judges.

Hundreds of Davis' supporters gathered

in a noisy rally on Sept. 11 at the Georgia State Capitol. Martina Correia, Troy's sister, who has tirelessly worked to free her brother, held a cell phone to the microphone. From his death row cell, Davis thanked the crowd for their efforts. "I am an innocent man. Until I am free, justice is not done."

Correia sent a Sept. 15 message to Davis supporters stating that his "lawyers presented the additional witnesses who told accounts of police detectives threatening them with guns and the DA threatening with perjury if they changed their testimonies against Troy. Most of these people were teenagers."

Activists with Amnesty International, the ACLU of Georgia and Georgians for an Alternative to the Death Penalty are redoubling their efforts to save Davis' life. An emergency appeal has been filed with the U.S. Supreme Court and letters are being sent to the Pardons and Parole Board which can still intervene to reverse the execution. A mass march has been announced for Sept. 18 with solidarity actions taking place elsewhere.



Troy Davis

Georgia's record of criminal injustice is long and bloody, whether from racist lynchings and mob killings to nonexistent or underfunded public defenders. Georgia became the first state following the recent Supreme Court decision sanctioning lethal injection in death penalty cases to quickly restart the death chamber with the execution of William Earl Lynd last May 6.

Jack Alderman, who has been on Georgia's death row for over 33 years after being found guilty of killing his wife, was executed on Sept. 16. Alderman's trial also took place in Chatham County. Only the testimony of John Brown, who admitted killing Barbara Alderman, connects Jack to her murder. Brown, who originally was also sentenced to death, was released after serving 12 years. In 1985, Alderman refused to plead guilty in exchange for a life sentence, saying he was innocent. The Pardons and Parole Board had refused to even allow Alderman's lawyers an opportunity to plead for his life.

For more information about how you can support Davis, please go to www.gfadp.org or www.amnestyusa.org/troydavis. □

Lucasville uprising leader victim of prison abuse

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections (ODRC) have gone out of their way to harass Abdul-Muhaymin Nürüddin (aka James Bell), a leader of the 1993 Lucasville prison uprising.

In Sept. 2007, shortly after the ODRC's unwillingness to pay \$100,000 for Nürüddin's kidney transplant, two guards

threatened his life, cursed at him, cuffed and shackled him too tight, and made gestures as if to hang him or cut his throat.

He filed complaints which were superficially investigated, giving the guards ample opportunity to deny such behavior. Nürüddin wanted to appeal these findings, but he spent the following month in the hospital near death when the dialysis graft became infected with methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). After his release from the hospital, he was

told there was no extension on filing an appeal due to hospitalization.

In Jan. 2008, the ODRC forcibly cut his beard after threatening to "put him in the hole" if he didn't cut it, a significant violation of his religious rights. The BOP refused to acknowledge Nürüddin's legally adopted Islamic name.

Even before the uprising, prisoners in the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility (SOCF) in Lucasville, Ohio, held Nürüddin in great respect for the legal assistance he provided. He worked in the prison law library and prepared appeals, civil law suits, and writs of habeas corpus.

During the first three days of the prison siege, April 11-13, 1993, Nürüddin was one of the prisoners negotiating with prison officials. The authorities dubbed Nürüddin the "right hand man" of Sunni Muslim Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan, who was considered by prosecutors to be one of the leaders of the uprising and subsequently received the death penalty.



Abdul-Muhaymin Nürüddin

them with the death of a guard. Namir also received a death sentence in his sham trial.

Despite the intense harassment directed at him, Nürüddin has been an active participant in campaigns initiated by a coalition of pris-

oner advocacy organizations, including the Cleveland Lucasville 5 Defense Committee. The death-sentenced Lucasville uprising prisoners are known as the Lucasville 5.

In a recent campaign for regular family visits for death row prisoners, Nürüddin stated boldly in a letter to the warden of the prison where four of the Lucasville 5 are held, "Since you [Warden Houk] may unconstitutionally resort to murdering innocent men, the Lucasville 5, on your death row, at least allow them the right to contact visits with their families and other loved ones before you murder them."

Nürüddin also wrote to Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland as part of the International Unity Day of Action on Feb. 4. The governor forwarded the letter to ODRC Director Terry Collins, who responded that all prisoners who were involved in the "riot" can expect to serve their entire sentences.

Send support letters to Abdul-Muhaymin Nürüddin, aka James H. Bell Jr., #179-394, Correctional Reception Center, Orient, OH 43146-0300. Call 614-466-3555, fax 614-466-9354 or e-mail Strickland through the link found at www.governor.ohio.gov to demand freedom for Nürüddin (James Bell) and other prisoners railroaded by the injustice system as well as to demand an immediate end to the harassment of these courageous men. □

Interview with Livia Giuggioli Firth

Continued from page 2

back, and more. With the discovery of Pedro Polakoff's crime scene photographs, you can clearly see how messed up the crime scene was that night!

Second, the testimonies supporting the prosecution scenario were false—all of them!

Third, the presiding judge, Albert Sabo, was heard saying, on the first day of the trial, "I am going to help them fry that n—r." Then, shocking us even more, Mumia's 1995-1997 PCRA appeal was before this same judge. Are you joking?

HB: Mumia's current appeal to the Supreme Court will be citing 3rd Circuit Judge Thomas Ambro's dissenting opinion, which declared that the court had actually created new standards for a Batson claim when it denied Mumia's claim. Do you think this strong statement has received adequate coverage in the mainstream media?

LGF: Not really, but again, there are so many awful cases in America like Mumia's. So many innocent people are sentenced after unfair trials. Look at Troy Davis! That is another horrible case. Hopefully the film will help people to think and real-

ize that maybe there is more to the story. And hopefully it will help other cases too.

You can't dismiss Mumia as "a cop killer." Also, until there is a new trial, you will never know if he really is "a cold blooded monster" as they call him.

HB: Do you think the Supreme Court will now consider Mumia's case?

LGF: This is a very difficult question. I do not know. It is not very likely, but you never know. If I did not have hope, I would never have produced this movie!

HB: Your film features a new interview with Billy Cook. What do you think is the significance of this interview?

LGF: Well, first of all, Billy has never spoken since the night of the shooting. He was not called to testify and "disappeared" after that. So this is the first time he gets to talk about what happened that night. He will not tell the whole story until there is a new trial, but he confirmed a few interesting things. You must see the movie!

HB: Anything else to add?

LGF: I hope Mumia will have a new trial because he has been sitting in solitary confinement for 27 years, and it is a disgrace. We will never know the truth about Dec. 9, 1981, until then. □

Foreclosures provoke coast-to-coast fightback

By Gerry Scoppettuolo
Boston

If you read just the Wall Street Journal or the New York Times, or just watch CNBC, you would think the unfolding debt crisis is something just happening on Wall Street, despite the occasional “human interest” stories about home foreclosures and their impact on renters and homeowners.

The real story of the foreclosure epidemic, however, is being written on the streets in eviction blockades and community struggles. The real actors in this drama are not high-powered brokers or hedge fund managers, but working-class families—African American, Latin@ and white—who are fighting back by organizing neighborhood committees and joining rallies and demonstrations.

One leader in the struggle is Paula Taylor, whose home in Boston’s Roxbury neighborhood was foreclosed by Bank of America on Sept. 5 as 75 multinational protestors surrounded her house in Boston’s eighth eviction blockade this year.

The constable and a squad of 16 Boston police officers had to arrest four people in the two-hour standoff. Protesters chained themselves to Taylor’s back door after the police were deterred from going in the front door. Jim Brooks, an African-American organizer from Boston’s City Life tenant rights group, had chained his wheelchair to the front porch. As soon as the police left, a contingent of protesters, under City Life’s lead, marched to the local Bank of America branch where they picketed.

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner joined the blockade, which included supporters from City Life/Vida Urbana, Four Corners Neighborhood Association, Service Employees union, Alternative for Community and Environment (ACE), T Riders Union, Women’s Fightback Network, the Boston chapters of F.I.S.T. (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) and the International Action Center.

Three major demonstrations focusing



Jim Brooks chains his wheelchair to Paula Taylor’s house.
PHOTO: JEREMY HANSON

on foreclosures will be taking place around the U.S. On Sept. 17, protesters in Michigan will gather at the state Capitol in Lansing starting at 11 a.m. for a mass action called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. They will demand passage of a two-year foreclosure moratorium introduced in the state legislature there. To sign an online petition supporting the moratorium, go to www.moratorium-mi.org.

A demonstration on Sept. 17 will also occur in downtown Los Angeles at the Federal Building starting at noon, sponsored by the Los Angeles Labor/Community Coalition, which includes Service Employees Local 721. Protesters will demand a national moratorium on all foreclosures. And on Sept. 20 in Boston, activists will gather at noon outside Countrywide Bank at 811 Mass Avenue at Albany Street in a protest being organized by the Boston Women’s Fightback Network. The Boston demonstration is part of an ongoing petition campaign demanding that the Governor of Massachusetts use his constitutional powers to declare an Economic State of Emergency in the state and issue executive orders to stop utility shutoffs, stop

foreclosures and evictions, and roll back food and fuel prices. For more information and to download the flyer and petition, go to www.iacboston.org/wfn.

The Ad-Hoc National Network to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions sent an emergency letter Sept. 16 to members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs demanding a national moratorium on all foreclosures.

Under federal law, a mandatory 90-day moratorium on foreclosures is imposed during a government-declared state of emergency. The letter points out that the recent federal takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac is a de facto declaration of a state of emergency, and that the government should obey its own laws by implementing a mandatory moratorium on mortgages owned or insured by these institutions.

The Network also launched an online petition campaign directed at the new conservator of Fannie Mae and Freddy Mac, the treasury secretary, and the House and Senate Banking and Finance Committees demanding an immediate Federal Moratorium on Foreclosures and Evictions. To sign on, go to www.stopforeclosuresandevictions.org. □

ON THE

SAG fights on

The Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists began negotiations for a new contract with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers on April 15. The AMPTP issued its final offer June 30. After SAG’s counteroffer was rejected, its board of directors voted unanimously on Aug. 21 to reject the final offer based on two issues: use of nonunion actors on Internet productions costing less than \$15,000 a minute and no residuals (payment) for work used in new media. As a special bulletin about the contract negotiations on www.sag.org notes, “giving up on residuals in new media will mean the beginning of the end of residuals in all media.” This is the same issue that the Writers Guild fought for and won last winter. Although formal bargaining was recessed July 16, informal talks are continuing and the old contract remains in effect. Unfortunately, 62 percent of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists ratified the reactionary offer on July 8.

No contract, no cookies!

The 140 workers who bake cookies at New York City’s Stella D’oro factory in the Bronx have been on strike since Aug. 13. Brynwood Partners, which bought the factory in 2006, has offered Bakers’ Local 50 a contract that raises some wages, lowers others, leaves some unchanged, reduces the number of paid holidays and eliminates paid sick days—all to make the workers pay for the rising cost of flour, sugar and shortening. “How can I send my kids to college if every year I’m going to make less money?” Juan Torres, who has worked for Stella D’oro for 15 years, told the New York Times. (Sept. 14)

9,311 criminal charges against Iowa meatpacker

The owners and managers at Agriprocessors meatpacking plant in Pottsville, Iowa, were charged with 9,311
Continued on page 5

Metrolink train wreck: *A rush to judgment, again*

By Stephen Millies

Just 19 hours after 25 people were killed in the Sept. 12 train wreck outside Los Angeles, the dead engineer was blamed for it.

Metrolink commuter rail spokesperson Denise Tyrrell announced that Train No. 111’s deceased engineer, Robert Sanchez, caused the wreck by passing a stop signal.

Even the Republican Los Angeles County Supervisor and Metrolink board member Don Knabe called this “a rush to judgment.” National Transportation Safety Board reps also said it was too early to cast guilt. The Safety Board’s investigation will take months to complete.

Tyrrell—who had been carrying out Metrolink’s orders—was forced to resign on Sept. 15.

Many years ago a co-worker in an Amtrak signal tower told me that when there’s a wreck, the aim was to “blame the dead man.” (Or “dead woman.”) The spouse would still get benefits while the carrier would be let off the hook.

Metrolink claims its computer showed Train No. 111 going by a stop signal right into an oncoming Union Pacific freight train. (The three Union Pacific crew members were injured but survived.) But the actual signal indication on the tracks could have been different.

Richard Sanchez controlled the throttle for 12 years on Los Angeles commuter trains. “He was known as one of the better engineers for Metrolink,” said Tim Smith, California chairman of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen. “He has been proactive about

calling attention to things.” (New York Times, Sept. 14)

KCBS-TV spread an unproven rumor that Sanchez had sent a text message to teenaged rail fans just before the crash. Television camera trucks have camped outside the home of Sanchez’s grieving family.

Issues behind tragedy

Firefighters and other rescuers were sickened by the carnage. The scene of the wreck looked like it had been bombed, like U.S. planes bombed Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan.

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa asked why there wasn’t a safety device that would have prevented this tragedy. “There needs to be some kind of failsafe secondary measure to protect against human error, because two trains on the same track is just unacceptable,” he said. (cbs.2.com)

Such systems have been around since the 1920s. The Pennsylvania Railroad installed “cab signal” systems on some of its main routes, including the line from New York City to Washington D.C. now owned by Amtrak.

Cab signals give engineers a replica inside their cabs of the wayside signals outside. Combined with “automatic train control,” passing a stop signal in cab-signal-equipped territory will cause an emergency application of the air brakes.

Amtrak’s lines in the Northeast have cab signals, as do the New Jersey Transit, Metro North and the Long Island railroad lines. The SEPTA commuter lines around Philadelphia and most of Chicago’s METRA commuter lines are also equipped, as are some lines belonging to

the Norfolk Southern, CSX and Union Pacific.

None of the Metrolink lines have cab signals.

Railroads used to brag about these safety devices. The Chicago and North Western’s Oct. 27, 1957, passenger timetable pointed out that its Chicago to Omaha line was equipped with automatic train control. (The Union Pacific has since gobbled up the North Western.)

The Interstate Commerce Commission allowed the Baltimore & Ohio—now CSX—to rip out cab signals to save money. This was a contributing cause to a Feb. 16, 1996, train wreck in Silver Spring, Md. Eleven people died, eight of whom were Job Corps trainees going home.

Cab signals probably wouldn’t have prevented the Metrolink crash. Even if the commuter train had been brought to a stop, the Union Pacific freight train still would have slammed into it. This wreck occurred on a horseshoe curve near a 500-foot-long tunnel.

Installing “Positive Train Control” (PTC) might be the answer. Kitty Higgins, a member of the National Transportation Safety Board, told the New York Times that PTC “could have prevented this accident.”

One form of PTC is the Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System (ACES) installed on Amtrak’s Boston to Washington, D.C. line.

The railroad industry claims that installing PTC is too expensive. Yet CSX had a record operating income last year of \$2.3 billion.

What it costs to occupy Iraq for a single day could easily pay for installing PTC on the entire Metrolink system.

The writer is a member of District 1402, Transportation Communication Union, IAM.



PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

misdemeanor violations of Iowa’s child labor laws on Sept. 9. Meanwhile, nearly 400 workers, mostly undocumented immigrants from Guatemala who were forced to endure horrendous working conditions, were arrested and have been in jail since a vicious May 12 raid on the plant, which can only be described as police-state terrorism. (New York Times, Sept. 10)

Will Agriprocessors’ bosses spend even a day behind bars? Most likely they’ll pay fines like those responsible for the deaths of six miners and three rescuers at the Genwal Resources mine collapse in Utah last summer and the deaths of 13 workers at the Imperial Sugar refinery near Savannah which blew up in February. Though reports clearly show that the owners knowingly made workers labor in unsafe working conditions, the bosses at both facilities have only been slapped with fines (\$1.6 million and \$8.7 million, respectively) instead of charged with premeditated murder. Something is very wrong with this picture. (New York Times, July 26)

Extend unemployment benefits now!

The same week that the Treasury Department anted up a billion-dollar bailout of mortgage banks Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, a measly seven-week extension of unemployment benefits for workers was proposed in the House of Representatives as part of a second economic “stimulus” package. Workers in states with high unemployment would receive an additional 13 weeks’ coverage. Will such a bill pass in time to help the 800,000 workers whose coverage ends in October? Or the 1.1 million workers due to be cut from the rolls by the end of 2008? (blog.aflcio.org, Sept. 12) With unemployment at a five-year high of 6.1 percent in August, it’s time to turn the tables on the ruling class and demand a comprehensive bailout for the workers!

More workplaces “gay friendly”

A Human Rights Campaign Foundation report issued in September revealed that of 583 companies rated, 259 received a perfect score for their treatment of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees and customers. The businesses have implemented diversity and inclusive policies and provide domestic partner benefits. In contrast, only 195 companies achieved a perfect score in 2007. (Workers Independent News, www.laborradio.org, Sept. 9) □

Mark Nov. 15-16 Workers World Party conference

Workers World Party will be holding a national conference in New York City Nov. 15-16. The general theme of the conference will be “Challenges and tasks facing our movement following the 2008 elections.” The venue for the conference will be announced soon.

Plenaries, discussion groups, strategy sessions and cultural performances will focus on themes of prime importance for workers, oppressed people and youth. There will be an assessment of the elections, no matter who wins, and the impact of the deepening economic crisis on the workers and oppressed—what it is and how we can fight back.

A view of Hurricane Ike

The following excerpts were written by Gloria Rubac, a well-known anti-death penalty activist in Houston. The account was written late Sept. 12, an hour before Hurricane Ike hit the city resulting in 2 million people losing their power.

I am not sure about a certain death for people in Galveston. They were under mandatory evacuation and did have buses for people to get out, but I have heard that 24,000 people are still there. Just tonight they have opened the high school for people remaining but no food, water or cots. The mayor and police are in a huge hotel that sits up high, so I imagine they will stay dry. Also, the media are in the hotel. A camera person for the Houston NBC affiliate is the brother of Joe Nichols, an innocent man executed last year. I just talked to his mom and she said the media are in the hotel where the mayor is. But the whole city is supposed to be flooded.

The certain death, if it happens, is for the poor who did not leave and don’t have boats and will wind up on roof tops. Winnie is near the coast and near High Island, which is a wonderful birding area during spring migration. It just doesn’t make sense that transportation isn’t provided when there is a required evacuation. Damn this system.

Michael Chertoff (Homeland Security secretary) is down here, but all I heard him talking about was the oil refineries and terrorism or something that I guess I tuned out.

Prisoners near the coast were actually evacuated days ago and visitation was

Before Ike hit

Lack of help angers Houston senior

Casey Davis, an 88-year-old woman who lives in a Houston housing project, told WW on Sept. 15, “In my opinion, the Houston Housing Authority gives less than a rat’s ass for public housing residents, particularly seniors. Before the hurricane, the residents received a notice to make sure that when they left that they locked the windows and doors to avoid damage to the property. But they kept no record on who was leaving, who was staying and what they needed. There were numerous people on dialysis, needing oxygen and in wheelchairs. Because they hired a property management company which may come to fix a leaky faucet, they never worried about anybody’s health. Instead neighbors were checking on other neighbors.”

cancelled in about 30 prison units where tens of thousands of prisoners were transferred because they don’t have staff to deal with visits since they have additional prisoners to watch.

They did this just two or three weeks ago during Hurricane Gustav. After Hurricane Rita three years ago, they didn’t evacuate, and it was so horrible with prisoners abandoned and left in their cells with no food or water. Some of the prisons flooded, and it was just a disaster. I hope the prison system learned something from that. But I do know that prisoners are evacuated all along the coast and have been for days

now. There’s about 160,000 prisoners in Texas, and I do know that there’s dozens of prisons along the coast, but I don’t know exactly how many.

Comrades, as in any natural disaster in the U.S., of course, it is the poor neighborhoods that will suffer the most and where the people have the least resources to deal with hurricanes and the after effects. We have so much to learn from Cuba.

I’ve got to finish my pot of gumbo, so I’ll have some comfort food during this hot, humid, mess. I probably won’t have power for days or weeks, so bye for now from hurricane country. □

Support builds for striking Teamsters

**By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Milwaukee**

Members of Teamsters Local 200 in Metro Milwaukee are entering their fourth week on strike against Waste Management over their pension fund and other hard-won gains.

Tom Millonzi, secretary-treasurer of Local 200, told this reporter during a visit to the union hall Sept. 14 that after bargaining in good faith for months with WM, the sanitation workers struck Aug. 24 over an unfair labor practice.

Millonzi said that WM was threatening workers and attempting to coerce and bargain with Local 200 members individually in an effort to supersede the collective bargaining process.

The main strike issues are the company’s intention to gut the workers’ current

pension fund with the goal of instituting a 401K-type plan and WM’s manipulation of routes.

The company issued its “last, best and final offer,” Sept. 10 to the Teamsters. (www.jsonline.com, Sept. 11) Currently a federal mediator is meeting with both sides individually and together with no progress up to now.

Waste Management is a multimillion dollar Texas-based Fortune 500 corporation well-known for its hostile anti-union activities. The Teamsters transport the refuse to landfills. It’s a difficult, dangerous and dirty job critical to communities’ health and safety.

In this strike, the company has flown in its “green team” scabs putting them up at a high-priced suburban hotel. And company security goon squads are filming the strikers on the picket line and elsewhere.

Despite this, the workers’ fighting spirit and morale is strong. The workers keep 10 picket lines going daily at major waste and recycling stations throughout Metro Milwaukee.

“If we don’t stand up for our pension for the older workers, we all won’t have anything when we retire,” Joe, a Local 200 member, told WW as he picked up his food donation with dozens of his fellow members.

WM’s actions have caused significant hardship for the strikers and for the cities, villages and municipalities the company operates in. Garbage and recycling is piling up because scab crews are abysmally inefficient and pose numerous safety risks. Thus where WM has contracts with various cities such as Germantown, there are moves by residents to sever contracts with the company due to its anti-union activities which pose numerous risks for residents.

“As a Milwaukee resident I under-

stand how the Teamster workers greatly contribute to the overall health of Metro Milwaukee. Waste Management’s actions are putting residents’ health and safety at risk. I applaud the Teamster’s courage and solidarity as they continue to fight for a fair contract. They need our support,” said Michael Landers, a youth educator who came to the union hall.

Labor/community support for the striking workers is strong according to the union. The week of Sept. 14 Teamster members nationwide are coming to Milwaukee to help broaden support. Strike support activities have included mass leafleting to major community events in the Metro Milwaukee area and a campaign where strike supporters place a sign in their yard.

Support correspondence is also rolling in. Teresa Mambu-Rasch of Milwaukee sent a donation and the following letter: “Please find my donation of \$200 enclosed. In December 2006, my grandfather Robert Krantz passed away. He was a lifelong Teamster member out of Philadelphia. He and his brothers and sisters worked hard to provide for their families. I grew up listening to stories of the Teamsters on strike and always knew that my family’s success was due to the hard struggles and victories won on the picket line. A few months ago, my family received his Teamsters death benefit. The amount enclosed represents my portion. I wish the members of Local 200 all the best.”

Donations should be made out to “Teamsters Waste Hauler Fund” and sent to Teamsters Local 200, 6200 Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI 53213. Call 414-771-6363 and/or e-mail info@teamster-slocal200.com. Log on to the Web site teamsterslocal200.com, for picketing locations and more information. □

Profit system wreaks havoc CAPITALIST MELTDOWN

Continued from page 1

rities and other risky investments of gamblers and speculators all over the globe.

AIG has borrowed money from many of the big banks and gambled its assets in order to make bigger profits. As the mortgages began to fail and the holders of the mortgage-backed securities began to demand their insurance payoffs, AIG's financial position was deteriorating on a daily and hourly basis.

It is a measure of the system's financial recklessness that an insurance company, which is supposed to be regulated to keep it conservative, precisely because it is the custodian of funds that must be available to meet the emergency needs of the insured, was free to participate in the global casino.

AIG operates in over 100 countries, has 116,000 employees—62,000 in Asia—and has private banking facilities for wealthy people. It brokers deals in stocks, manages mutual funds, owns 900 planes for its leasing business, and in general has leveraged its insurance business into a globalized, speculative operation.

Crisis of workers and oppressed is ignored

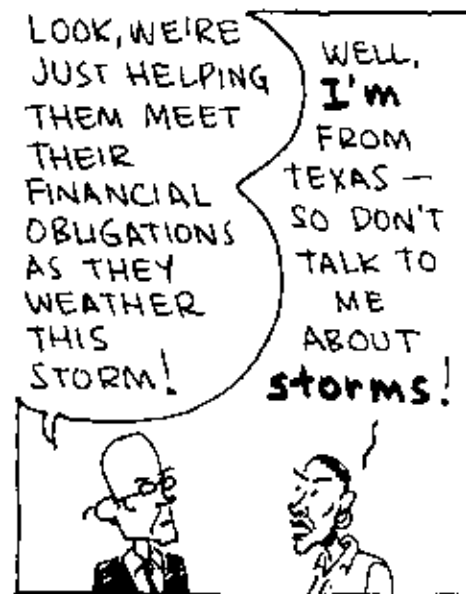
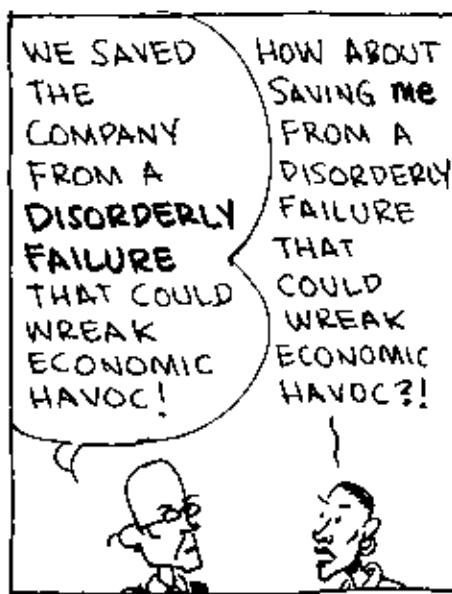
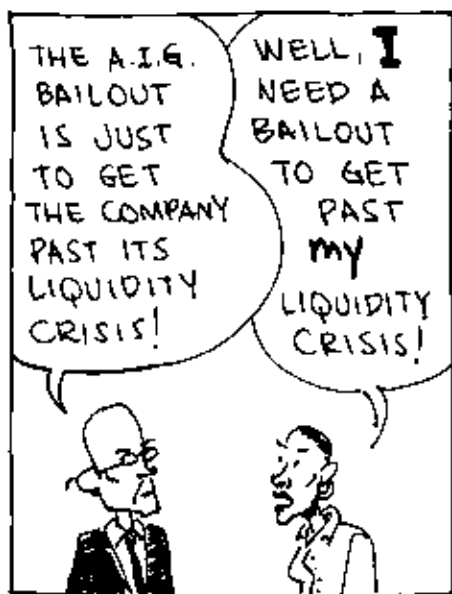
The crisis of the bankers has made sensational headlines, with hour-by-hour accounts of the agony of a handful of millionaires and billionaires on Wall Street. But the capitalist media has sidelined the real drama of mass foreclosures and layoffs affecting the lives of millions of workers.

Hundreds of billions of dollars have been doled out to bankers who got into a crisis largely because of predatory mortgage lending and the reselling of those mortgages on the global capital market. No relief has been forthcoming for the victims of the mortgage banking industry.

Little attention was paid to the news that in August there were 303,879 foreclosure filings—a 12-percent increase from the previous month and a 27-percent increase from a year ago. One in every 416 households in the U.S. received a foreclosure notice in August. In California alone there were 101,714 filings, up 40 percent from the previous month and 75 percent over a year ago.

While shedding tears over the travails of bankers, the capitalist press had no headlines about a recent study entitled "State of the Dream: Foreclosed," which showed that the foreclosure crisis has resulted in the greatest destruction of personal wealth in history in the African-American and Latin@ communities.

According to the study, African-



American borrowers have lost between \$71 billion and \$92 billion because of loans taken out over the last eight years. The figure for the Latin@ population, which is even higher than the African-American population, shows losses of between \$75 billion and \$98 billion.

Alongside the financial crisis is the growing crisis of the capitalist economy overall, as overproduction results in mounting unemployment. More than 84,000 workers lost their jobs in August, bringing the yearly total up to 605,000. More than 2 million people have been added to the jobless in the past 12 months, bringing the official total to 9.4 million out of work. Long-term unemployment is also rising.

Unemployment for Black workers reached 10.6 percent, mainly due to job losses among Black women. Unemployment among single mothers and youth is also growing. And these government figures do not include millions of discouraged workers who have given up looking for jobs.

In the midst of the credit crisis, it was announced that industrial production, the basis of jobs and income, fell in August by the most in three years. There was a 1.1 decrease in output in factories, mines and utilities. Auto production went down by 12 percent, the most in a decade.

One thing is clear from the present crisis: Neither the capitalist class, which owns all the productive wealth, nor the capitalist government, which oversees the system, is in control of the economic or the financial situation.

Each measure they take to stem the credit crisis is followed by another outbreak of panic. Each time the stock market surges, it quickly loses all its gains and more. And no matter how much the pun-

its declare that there is no recession, the steady growth of unemployment and the decline in production continues, regardless of any so-called "economic stimulus."

Shift in ruling class psychology

The intervention of the capitalist government in the banking crisis has brought about a sudden shift in the psychology of the ruling class as they watch their system spinning out of control. After the capitalist system got over the crisis of the 1930s, the bosses in the U.S. began to forget why President Roosevelt had taken unprecedented measures to rescue the economy. They began to scorn any government intervention in their affairs.

Of course, they have always been ready to take handouts in many forms—subsidies, military spending, special legislation, tax cuts, etc. But they have felt themselves to be the high and mighty corporate rulers of the world.

Government intervention, they said, was for Europe and for social democrats. The European ruling classes had been rocked by the workers and by class struggle, division and war. Because the European rulers were weak and needed to be propped up by the capitalist governments, they had to submit to state monitoring of their affairs. Such a course, however, was strongly rejected by Wall Street and the giant industrialists.

This latest crisis is a huge comedown for U.S. finance capital, which is used to lecturing the other capitalist governments on the evils of government intervention. Suddenly, however, the bankers and bosses are all united, from the right wing to the moderates and liberals, in applauding the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Board for their "timely" intervention. They are submitting, grudgingly but clearly, to government oversight and monitoring in the interests of saving their system from collapse.

With this crisis, the structure of U.S. capitalism is entering a new stage. The capitalist government has begun, on a piecemeal basis at first but perhaps more systematically in the future, to absorb the liabilities and bad debts of the gambling and speculating financial oligarchy. This can only deepen the crisis in the long run by driving it deeper into the organism of U.S. capitalism.

This is bound to have not only economic but political repercussions around the world as rival imperialists see the vulnerability of the rulers in the U.S. It is bound to weaken U.S. imperialism and at the same time make it more dangerous as it seeks to get out of its crisis.

It is no accident that the Wall Street Journal on Sept. 16, in the midst of in-depth reporting on the financial crisis, ran an article entitled "Keeping Their

Powder Dry: Draft Boards Hang On, Just in Case." The Journal does not necessarily speak for the whole ruling class, nor for the Pentagon at the moment. But one reflex emerging in the midst of the crisis from some section of the ruling class is beginning to think about an expanded war drive as a solution.

With the "New World Order" stoking conflict with Russia in Georgia, invading Pakistan and escalating the war against Afghanistan, the possibility of a new military adventure should never be ruled out.

Capitalism's basic contradiction

The Democrats want to blame things on Bush and call for more regulation. Of course the financiers have gotten the government to overturn most of the regulations, dating back to the Depression, putting restraints on their gambling operations. This deregulation started with the Reagan administration and reached a high point in the Clinton Administration. At the instigation of Citicorp and Robert Rubin, who left Goldman Sachs to become Secretary of the Treasury, the Glass-Steagall Act was repealed in 1998, under the sponsorship of now McCain economic adviser Phil Gramm. The law forbids commercial banks from becoming involved in investment banking, underwriting stocks and stock market operations, underwriting and other activities that facilitated widespread hyper-speculation of the type that preceded the Depression.

And of course the Bush administration undermined all attempts to inhibit the predatory mortgage lenders and gave a complete free hand to all manner of unregulated speculation in trillions of dollars worth of speculative gambling, which increased the overall risk in the global financial system. But, Democratic Party demagoguery notwithstanding, the Bush administration is not the cause of the crisis.

Government intervention, stronger regulation of the monopolies and more "prudent" practices cannot overcome the fundamental contradiction of capitalism: private ownership of the globalized, social means of production.

It is an irreconcilable contradiction that a tiny minority control the production of the world's wealth for their own profit. It is an irreconcilable contradiction that this global apparatus stops functioning when there is a crisis of profitability for the bosses. And such a crisis always arises, sooner or later, because of the anarchy of capitalist production.

No capitalist knows where what is produced can be sold. But in the rush for "market share" for the highest profit, each capitalist grouping is compelled to expand production.

Continued on page 9



Lehman Brothers worker.

The capitalist media has sidelined the real drama of mass foreclosures and layoffs affecting the lives of millions of workers.

The meaning of the collapse of Lehman Brothers

As *WW* continues to look back over its 50 year history, the following excerpts are from an article, written by Workers World Party chairperson, Sam Marcy on April 16, 1984, which hold tremendous lessons today as a growing number of Wall Street firms like Lehman Brothers continue to collapse with no end in sight. This article was written during the Reagan administration. Go to www.workers.org to read the entire article.

By Sam Marcy

The collapse or merger of a financial banking combine has more significance than a very large industrial failure. Strains in the nervous system, the circulatory system of the anatomy of capitalism, reveal the depth of the disease in the system and are much more dangerous.

When a financial giant like Lehman Brothers, known for its so-called stability, responsibility, and above all for its high profits, either decides to sell or is swallowed by an even larger finance capitalist conglomerate it is an unmistakable sign of danger in the system as a whole.

This is especially true because there have been in the recent period several other combinations of giant financial institutions.

The financial analysts of the bourgeois-

sie, whenever confronted with such phenomena, almost always point to the kind of superficial aspects which avoid fundamental causes—poor management, bickering and tensions within the summits of the company, cash flow problems, momentary weak capitalization, stretching resources too thin, and so on.

In the case of Lehman Brothers, the financial analysts have found a rather unique explanation for this portentous development. Having been hard put to explain how such a stable and respectable financial conglomerate, regarded as a paragon of capitalist virtues, could suddenly fold or be swallowed by another goliath, they have hit upon this explanation.

“Partnerships,” said Michael Tushman, a professor of organizational behavior at Columbia Business School, “are essentially forms of organized anarchies.” He is quoted in an article in the New York Times (April 15, page 24, Business Section) on the projected absorption of Lehman Brothers, Kuhn Loeb by Shearson/American Express.

There you have it in a nutshell! As succinctly summarized as one could possibly ask. But what did the good professor say?

Organized anarchies—isn’t this a contradiction in terms? If it is organized then

it is not anarchy. If it is chaotic and anarchic, it is not organized. What the professor is really doing is consciously or unconsciously confusing organizational form with social content.

Partnerships, like corporations or associations, are a form of capitalist economic organization. They vary in each case and the form is chosen by the capitalists for the particular purpose of the accumulation of capital—profit. The form in which the capital is organized is like the package or container for the capital. The packaging can only incidentally affect the contents, that is, the capital itself.

Chaos goes deeper than mere packaging

The chaos, the anarchy, lies not with the form, the packaging, but with the content of capitalist production. There is where the anarchy lies; there is the chaos. Its reflection in the financially most powerful combines of investment banks and insurance companies is a most dangerous sign.

No amount of changing the form, the packaging, can change the fundamental contradiction inherent in capitalist production, which arises out of the irreconcilability of private ownership with the col-

lective organization of capitalist industry and finance.

That’s where the contradiction is. That’s where the chaos and anarchy lie. And they grow and develop independently of the will of the capitalist. No matter how attractively or conveniently a can of worms may be packaged, it cannot be turned into a can of peas.

A capitalist recovery comes now and then but is inevitably followed by economic bust. In the imperialist epoch this takes on a more aggravated character because of the artificial bolstering of inflation and militarism.

Thus we see there is no permanency or stability, even among the most powerful investment banking houses which advise and manage the big industrial corporations.

Only the overthrow of the capitalist system, only the abolition of the system that puts the means of production in the hands of an ever smaller group of multimillionaires and billionaires, can abolish this anarchy.

Abolishing this anarchy of capitalist production will also abolish capitalist wars, unemployment, racism and all the other devastating evils which the continued existence of the system perpetuates and increases. □

Will NATO’s expansion bubble burst?

By Sara Flounders

Part I: Dick Cheney’s voyage exposes U.S. weaknesses

U.S. imperialism’s every effort to assert itself and reverse its declining global domination confirms its weakened position.

This weakened U.S. position was never more obvious than during Vice-President Dick Cheney’s early September visit of Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. And it was confirmed when NATO members sidestepped U.S. demands to impose sanctions on Russia after Georgia’s Aug. 7 invasion of South Ossetia and Russia’s counterattack. Imperialist NATO members Germany, France and Italy politely put on hold the U.S. push to include Georgia and Ukraine in the U.S.-commanded NATO alliance.

The European imperialists need the oil and gas from Russia to fuel their own industries. They also want to protect their own corporate investments in Russia more than they want to back up a crumbling U.S. position.

Cheney visited Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan in Washington’s effort to ratchet up military threats against Russia and to show U.S. determination to control this strategic region on Russia’s border. As he visited, 18 NATO war ships, equipped with strategic weapons, including cruise missiles, appeared in the Black Sea off the coasts of Georgia and Russia. The USS Mount Whitney, flagship of the U.S. Navy’s Sixth Fleet, docked on Sept. 6 at Georgia’s Black Sea port of Poti, six miles from a Russian military base.

Escalating U.S. military threats worry the business interests of not only the imperialist allies in Western Europe. They have also led to a sharp confrontation with the emerging capitalist class in Russia.

This grouping acted earlier as if they would remain partners with U.S. imperialism in the long-term exploitation of

the giant, once-socially-owned industries of the Soviet Union. They were totally compliant with the breakup of the USSR. Then they found to their chagrin that the imperialist pirates didn’t honor their agreements.

Many historical studies assert that in 1990 Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev made the astounding capitulation that a united capitalist Germany could join NATO after Secretary of State Baker gave assurances that NATO would not extend its jurisdiction to the East. German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, Francois Mitterrand of France and John Major of Britain made similar promises.

U.S. imperialism has no room for capitalist partners who ultimately become capitalist rivals. Washington’s policy, stated explicitly in documents in the mid-1990s, was to transform NATO—a U.S.-commanded military alliance—to prevent socialist planning and ownership from reemerging and to assure that no new rival capitalist power in Russia or rival military bloc in Europe was established. U.S. military and corporate domination of the entire region was the goal.

NATO’s bombing, dismemberment and occupation of Yugoslavia from 1994 on set a precedent for the rapid expansion of NATO as a U.S.-dominated military alliance.

The new Russian capitalist class watched all the countries of Eastern Europe and many of the former republics of the USSR turned into pawns and used as anti-Russian military bases. Now Russian Prime Minister Putin is belatedly trying to assert some sovereignty over a vast, encircled country, greatly weakened since the Soviet days.

U.S. policies rebuked

That Putin would denounce the role of U.S. warships in the Black Sea delivering supposedly “humanitarian aid” to Georgia is hardly surprising. But even French

Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner—who had called NATO’s 1999 bombing campaign against Yugoslavia a “humanitarian war”—questioned current U.S. tactics and pointedly said that “the use of warships to deliver humanitarian aid risks enflaming tensions with Russia.”

Kouchner’s statement shows all the tensions, fissures and weaknesses within this major alliance that can unravel it. Kouchner said that the crisis “can only be solved politically and not with warships.” He also cast doubt on the political value of Cheney’s trip to Georgia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. (Bloomberg News, Sept 6)

Cheney’s visit to Azerbaijan, an oil-rich country on the Caspian Sea that was once a republic of the Soviet Union, was a big setback. The U.S. financed the building of a \$4- billion, 1,000-mile, million-barrels-a-day oil pipeline from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, across Georgia to its capital Tbilisi to Ceyhan, a port in Turkey.

The vast and expensive construction project—called the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan or BTC line—was a U.S. effort begun during the Clinton administration. Its whole purpose was to route oil for Western markets away from transit through Russia.

For the same reason, billions were also spent on the Nabucco gas pipeline from Baku via Georgia to Turkey.

According to a Sept. 8 Times of London article entitled: “How the West is losing the energy cold war,” Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev publicly snubbed Cheney, phoned Russian President Medvedev the moment after he met with Cheney and ruled out supplying gas for the Nabucco gas line. “A disgruntled Mr. Cheney apparently then failed to appear at an official banquet.”

Then on Sept. 16, the two pro-U.S. parties in the Ukraine regime split and brought down the government despite Washington’s efforts to keep them united against Moscow.

This is quite a turnaround after almost two decades of growing U.S. corporate and political domination of the entire region.

These setbacks don’t eliminate the risk of a new U.S. war. Opposing all U.S. wars and calling for the abolition of NATO is now on the agenda for the anti-war movement in the U.S.

“Part II: U.S. more dependent on military solutions” will appear in the next issue of WW.

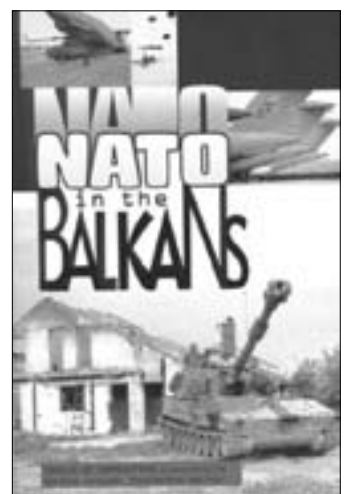
NATO in the Balkans: Voices of Opposition by Ramsey Clark and others

Confused about the real reasons the U.S. bombed Yugoslavia?

This book, released in 1998, will give you the secret background and hidden role of the U.S. and Germany in the dismemberment of Yugoslavia. NATO in the Balkans shows how sophisticated “Big Lie” war propaganda nearly silenced popular debate and opposition.

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International Action Center, 1998, ISBN 0-9656916-2-4, Soft Cover, 230 pp, Index



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Despite power sharing agreement

Imperialists maintain sanctions on Zimbabwe

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

After months of painstaking negotiations between the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the two main opposition parties, the Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai (MDC-T) and the small breakaway faction known as the MDC-M, the leadership of these organizations reached an agreement to share power in a Government of National Unity (GNU).

Under the political deal signed on Sept. 15, with the mediation of Republic of South Africa President Thabo Mbeki, President Robert G. Mugabe of ZANU-PF will maintain his executive authority as head-of-state. Mugabe will appoint members to the cabinet and remain in charge of the Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF).

At the same time, the post of prime minister will be re-instituted and taken by MDC-T leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who will serve along with an expanded cabinet including members of both MDC factions. Also there will be the appointment of two deputy prime ministers, one from each faction of the opposition.

The Western imperialist countries announced on the same day that the agreement was signed in Zimbabwe’s capital of Harare that the dreaded and devastating sanctions that have been imposed on this southern African nation would continue in force. This would be done, according to various governments including the United States, Britain and the European Union (EU) states, until they were satisfied that President Mugabe and his ZANU-PF party had relinquished effective control of the Zimbabwean state.

EU foreign policy minister Javier Solana said on Sept. 15, that any decision on the part of this economic alliance would be postponed until October. The EU has followed the line of the U.S. and the United Kingdom by imposing economic sanctions and banning key political officials from Zimbabwe, including President Mugabe himself, from traveling privately in any of these European member states.

On Sept. 15, a statement from the 27 EU ministers emphasized that these capital-

ist states would monitor the agreement’s implementation, with specific reference to the “immediate cessation of all forms of intimidation and violence.”

Following the EU statement, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which has also played a key role in the Western attempts to isolate Zimbabwe by freezing all economic and technical assistance to the country since 2006, said that it was prepared to engage in talks with the new unity government. Nonetheless, the IMF declared that the coalition government would have to take steps to prove that it is worthy of assistance from this U.S.-controlled financial agency.

The former colonial power’s representative, U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband, echoed this same approach through the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), affirming that the all-party administration in Zimbabwe would have to “make significant progress before the lifting of sanctions would be considered.”

The U.S., which has played a leading role in the attacks on Zimbabwe, followed the same reasoning by stating that the ruling ZANU-PF and President Mugabe must be viewed as turning over power to the Western-backed opposition MDC-T before any movement is made towards the normalization of political and economic relations between the two countries.

According to the assistant U.S. secretary of state for African affairs, Jendayi Frazer: “We haven’t yet had a chance to study the details of the agreement, nor do we know who will be in the cabinet of this new government, so in some ways it’s a bit premature for us to comment until we have the full picture.” (www.newsniffer.co.uk)

Lifting sanctions is key

What stands out most in the 15-page unity accord between ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC factions, is the necessity for the agreement to lead to the lifting of economic sanctions against Zimbabwe. The sanctions have plunged the economy in Zimbabwe into a severe depression. Without the assistance of the Republic of South Africa, the People’s Republic of China and other states and solidarity orga-

nizations, the government in Zimbabwe would not have been able to survive the onslaught that it has been subjected to for the last decade.

In the opening paragraphs of the agreement, all parties concur that an essential objective of the unity government is geared toward “COMMITTING ourselves to putting our people and our country first by arresting the fall in living standards and reversing the decline of our economy.”

Section 3.1 of the unity accord declares that “The Parties agree to give priority to the restoration of economic stability and growth in Zimbabwe. The Government will lead the process of developing and implementing an economic recovery strategy and plan.

“To that end, the parties are committed to working together on a full and comprehensive economic programme to resuscitate Zimbabwe’s economy, which will urgently address the issues of production, food security, poverty and unemployment and the challenges of high inflation, interest rates and the exchange rate.”

In addition to this acknowledgement of the economic crisis inside the country, the economic sanctions imposed by the West are clearly identified as the principal element in fostering the continued economic underdevelopment of Zimbabwe.

The document states in Section 4.6 that “Desirous and committed to bringing to an end the fall in the standards of living of our people, the Parties hereby agree:- (a) to endorse the SADC resolution on sanctions concerning Zimbabwe; (b) that all forms of measures and sanctions against Zimbabwe be lifted in order to facilitate a sustainable solution to the challenges that are currently facing Zimbabwe; and (c) commit themselves to working together in re-engaging the international community with a view to bringing to an end the country’s international isolation.”

Consequently, the continuation of sanctions against Zimbabwe by the Western imperialist nations can only undermine these peace efforts as well as the stated objectives of creating the conditions for economic development and prosperity for the citizens of the country.

The land question

Another important section of this agreement is the recognition of the necessity of maintaining the land redistribution program instituted by ZANU-PF after 2000. The Zimbabwean anti-colonial resistance during the late 19th century and all through the 20th century has been based on the retaking of the land and resources stolen by the British colonialists.

In the agreement, the document upholds the centrality of the land question for the future peace and development of the country. In Section 5.9 it states that “The Parties hereby agree to: (a) conduct a comprehensive, transparent and non-partisan land audit, during the tenure of the Seventh Parliament of Zimbabwe, for the

purpose of establishing accountability and eliminating multiple farm ownerships.”

In addition, the agreement commits to “(b) ensure that all Zimbabweans who are eligible to be allocated land and who apply for it shall be considered for allocation of land irrespective of race, gender, religion, ethnicity or political affiliation; (c) ensure security of tenure to all land holders.”

The agreement “calls upon the United Kingdom government to accept the primary responsibility to pay compensation for land acquired from former land owners for resettlement; and (e) work together to secure international support and finance for the land reform programme in terms of compensation for the former land owners and support for new farmers; and (f) work together for the restoration of full productivity on all agricultural land.”

It is instructive that this agreement has been met with such skepticism and lack of enthusiasm by the British former colonial power as well as the U.S. and its allies in the European Union (EU) and in other parts of the world. Judging from the statements emanating from London, Washington and Western Europe, these states will not be satisfied until Zimbabwe is firmly back under the control of the imperialist states.

This power sharing agreement has been met with great enthusiasm in Southern Africa and throughout the continent as a whole. According to the Zimbabwe Herald on Sept. 16, the signing ceremony was attended by a host of leaders from throughout the region.

The Herald stated that “Several heads of state and governments from the region, including SADC chairman and talks facilitator President Mbeki, African Union chairman and Tanzanian President Jikaya Kikwete and the chairman of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Peace, King Mswati III of Swaziland, were present.”

The article points out that “Also in attendance were Botswana President Seretse Khama Ian Khama, President Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia, Democratic Republic of Congo President Joseph Kabila, President Armando Guebuza of Mozambique, Lesotho Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili and Angolan Foreign Affairs Minister João Bernado de Miranda, who represented President Eduardo dos Santos.”

Nonetheless, the efforts of the people of Zimbabwe to develop solutions to their own problems internally with the assistance of other African states throughout the region can still be undermined by the machinations of the Western imperialist states.

Therefore, anti-imperialist forces throughout the world must carefully monitor the ongoing political developments in Zimbabwe and continue to uphold the right of self-determination and sovereignty for the people of this nation as well as others throughout the region and Africa as a whole. □

Grinding poverty leads to Somali tragedy

Thirty-five Somali corpses washed up onto the shores of Yemen recently according to Medecins Sans Frontieres, a medical charity agency. Another 29 Somalis are missing and feared to be dead. The dead Somalis had paid smugglers to take them across the Gulf of Aden in hopes of finding a better life.

The brutality of the smugglers was described by some of the 120 desperate survivors of the trek. Before the Somalis were forced to swim to shore at gunpoint, they described how they had gasoline splashed on them, and then were taunted with lighters. They also described beatings and torture as they desperately tried to escape on boats.

“We did not receive food, nor water; some of us were placed in the hull; several people died because of asphyxia; some others were thrown overboard, among them two children,” a survivor told MSF.

In Somalia, located in the Horn of Africa, there is currently no central government and the state is mainly concentrated in

the hands of a private militia. The Islamic government that existed in Somalia was overthrown by a U.S.-backed invasion by Ethiopia. Somalia also saw bombs fall on it recently, killing hundreds, and done in the name of the U.S. “war on terror.”

The infant mortality rate in Somalia is higher than 110 babies dying per 1,000 born. Less than 40 percent of Somali citizens can read. Life expectancy is below fifty years of age.

The few jobs that are available in Somalia include those of the lowest-paid phone operators on the planet and being a servant at a hotel. The vast majority of Somalis get by attempting to grow food in the unrewarding climate and selling scrap metal. (CIA World Factbook)

According to a United Nations refugee agency, an estimated 60 boats brought more than 1,700 Somalis to Yemen last month, almost triple the number for the same period last year. (UNHCR.org)

— Caleb T. Maupin

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Both capitalist parties support escalation

Bush shifts troops to Afghanistan from Iraq

By Deirdre Griswold

A major escalation of the brutal U.S./NATO war in Afghanistan is now underway.

The high-tech, seemingly random bombing of Afghan villages has increased, along with the number of invading foreign soldiers killed. By the beginning of September, more U.S. and British troops had been killed in Afghanistan in 2008 than in all of last year.

The Pentagon continues to say that its bombs killed “only” five civilians on Aug. 21 in the village of Nawabad. But the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan says it found convincing evidence, based on the testimony of eyewitnesses and others, that some 90 civilians were killed, including 60 children, 15 women and 15 men.

This was confirmed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who is not only an ally of Washington but owes his office to the U.S. invasion. Karzai said in the aftermath of the attack that he wanted to renegotiate the agreement regulating the status of U.S. forces in the country. His statement is a clear sign that popular outrage among the Afghan people over U.S. atrocities has reached the boiling point.

A revealing note: The bombing occurred after U.S. Special Forces attacked Nawabad from the ground and then called in air strikes. Accompanying them was former Lt. Col. Oliver North, notorious for his role in the Iran-contra scandal during the Reagan administration. North now works for Fox News and is a darling of the ultraright. (Christian Science Monitor, Aug. 29)

So what is the reaction in Washington to the growing anger over the U.S. role in Afghanistan?

President George W. Bush announced on Sept. 9, in a speech to the National Defense University, that he was sending at least 5,000 more U.S. soldiers to Afghanistan. The only criticism from the Obama/Biden Democratic ticket is that even more troops should be sent.

According to a Sept. 15 Pentagon announcement, a Marine air-ground task

Simultaneously, the laws of capitalism compel each capitalist to reduce the wages of the workers as much as possible. In the last three decades, the capitalist class has created a low-wage capitalist system that pits workers against each other on a global basis. This just aggravates and accelerates the contradiction of the profit system.

Under capitalism production is anarchic and eventually expands to a point where the workers cannot buy what has been produced at a price that will bring the bosses a profit. This anarchy of production is being reflected in the anarchy of the financial system in the present crisis.

In the present crisis, billionaires at the top of capitalist society may be losing part of their wealth, which really existed only on paper, but they are keeping their mansions, servants, limousines and Lear jets. It is the workers who are bearing the brunt of the economic crisis.

The only way out is the way of resistance—like the movement to stop foreclosures, which is gathering steam around the country. □

force, including the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, will go to Afghanistan in November to replace the two Marine units there now. In addition, the Army’s 3rd Brigade, 10th Mountain Division—based at Fort Drum, N.Y., and numbering up to 3,700 soldiers—will head to Afghanistan in January, rather than to Iraq as initially planned. (Washington Post, Sept. 16)

Bush’s announcement of the escalation came as the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, was testifying before a House committee that the Pentagon was overhauling its strategy in the area to cover both sides of the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. “I’m not convinced we’re winning it in Afghanistan; I am convinced we can,” he said, trying to get even more money from Congress for the war.

Mullen’s testimony confirmed what press reports had been saying: that Bush in July gave the Pentagon the go-ahead to carry the war into Pakistan—without even notifying the new government there. Mass demonstrations in Pakistan swept out the military ruler long favored by the U.S., Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

Next came news from Pakistan that U.S. helicopters had invaded on Sept. 15 and been repulsed.

A Pakistani official said that “American troops had tried to land in South Waziristan at a town called Angoor Adda, in a mountainous region with thick forest on the border with Afghanistan.

“Two Chinooks tried to land last night between 12:30 a.m. and 1:00 a.m.,’ the official said. They were fired upon by Pakistani troops, forcing the helicopters to return to the Afghan side of the border.

“The official said that locals, incensed at American incursions, also fired on the helicopters. ‘Our forces fired at them and

seeing this, the local people also came out and started shooting,’ the official said.” (New York Times, Sept. 16)

The Pentagon, of course, denied it had violated Pakistan’s sovereign territory.

According to Bush himself, in his Sept. 9 speech, the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan has increased “from less than 21,000 two years ago to nearly 31,000 today. The number of coalition troops—including NATO troops—increased from about 20,000 to about 31,000.” They are there, he says, “to protect the innocent. Regrettably, there will be times when our pursuit of the enemy will result in accidental civilian deaths.” It wasn’t much of an apology and didn’t satisfy anyone.

Bush also talked about all the great things the U.S. is doing in Afghanistan helping communities “fight corruption” and aiding development in “areas like health and infrastructure.”

Given the toxic track record of the Bush administration on corruption, lack of health care and a crumbling infrastructure in the U.S. itself, can anyone really believe that Washington has sent troops all the way to Afghanistan for humanitarian purposes?

The U.S. government is, however, putting up money to cultivate and protect a small elite in Afghanistan who will supposedly be loyal to their even richer imperialist masters. A luxury gated community is being built in Kandahar, near a large NATO air base, with the help of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a U.S. government agency.

While even dwellers in the Afghan capital of Kabul have no electricity, paved roads or clean water most of the time, residents of the “upmarket residential community” of Aino Mina in Kandahar can get “an eight-bedroom villa with a pool,

wraparound deck and balcony supported by doric columns.” Also within the community’s gates are “two private schools, football fields, playgrounds and private armed guards on duty 24 hours a day. A hospital, supermarket, pizza parlor and golf course are also planned.” (British Guardian, Sept. 12)

Mahmoud Karzai, brother of the president, is “the driving force behind the project,” says the Guardian. Karzai explains the war as “a clash between people who want a better life and those fighting any attempt at progress” and says Aino Mina represents “modernization.”

However, some of these wealthy Afghans are leaving, out of fear of the Taliban.

A Taliban representative “said his group opposed development because Karzai and the other investors were using government influence to enrich themselves.

“‘This is the land of the people,’ Qari Yousef Ahmadi said in a telephone interview. ‘The brother of Karzai is using it to serve his own interests and the interests of his friends.’”

The article doesn’t say what a home in this luxury development costs. The average yearly income of an Afghan family is between \$300 and \$400. The average salary for a U.S. civilian contractor working there is \$148,000. (indeed.com)

Some 100 Afghans have returned home this year after being released from the U.S. base at Guantánamo, where they were tortured. One of them, Mohammed Umr, says: “No one here likes the Americans. In the provinces there are civilians being killed for nothing. There is chaos, violence, tyranny. This is enough to make even an ordinary person furious. Imagine how someone who has suffered for years in prison feels.” (The Observer, Sept. 14) □

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Capitalist Meltdown

Continued from page 6





2008 elections: Will history repeat itself?

Remember Florida during the 2000 election? What about Ohio during the 2004 election? Massive fraud and manipulation aimed mainly at African-American voters in those states is widely regarded as having changed the outcome of who would eventually occupy the White House.

Will it be déjà vu all over again in 2008? Plans that would add Michigan to that list during this presidential campaign were uncovered in the online liberal magazine MichiganMessenger.com. A Sept. 10 article by Eartha Jane Melzer reported that the Republican Party plans to use lists of foreclosed homes to challenge African-American voters in Michigan, who are expected to come out in massive numbers to vote for Barack Obama for President on Nov. 4.

According to Melzer, 60 percent of all subprime loans—the ones more prone to default—were made to Michigan African Americans. One in every 176 households in Wayne County, which includes metropolitan Detroit, received a foreclosure notice during July. In Macomb County, the figure during the same month was one household in every 285, meaning that 1,834 homeowners received foreclosure filings. The Macomb County foreclosure rate puts it in the top three percent of all U.S. counties with distressed homeowners. And to top it all off, John McCain's regional headquarters is located in the same office building as foreclosure specialist David A. Trott, who raised between \$100,000 and \$250,000 for the Republican nominee.

The Detroit News printed a Sept. 12 article in response to Melzer's report, quoting a Macomb County Republican Party official who alleged that they were not planning to prevent African Americans facing foreclosure from voting. This rebuttal was printed after an understandable angry outcry following the Sept. 10 article.

The fact that African Americans and other oppressed peoples are concerned about being disenfranchised from this upcoming historic election is totally justified. Not only recent history but past history speaks for itself.

Restricting the "right to vote" is a long-standing tradition in the U.S. that formally began when the Declaration of

Independence stated that only white-male property owners could legally vote. Even when slavery was abolished and voting was legal for men of African descent, the right to vote was soon sabotaged by poll taxes, special literacy tests, lynchings and violence when Black people tried to register and join the voting rolls.

The federal Voting Rights Act was only passed a little more than forty years ago in 1965 on the heels of the heroic Civil Rights movement. More recently in Florida in 2000 voter registrations for many African Americans were erased when a contractor hired by the state of Florida removed names that were similar to those on a list of people with felony convictions who were permanently banned from voting in that state at that time.

Again in 2004 in Ohio, massive and varied methods were used to influence the outcome of the election—from providing too few voting machines in urban African-American polling places, which created long waits that discouraged voting, to deleting legal registrations. Many African-American voters testified to such discriminatory tactics at hearings held to investigate the election.

With African-American homeowners disproportionately targeted with subprime, high-rate and adjustable-rate loans; with less accumulated assets resulting from the legacy of slavery, Jim Crow and racism; with higher unemployment and underemployment, it is no surprise that African Americans—particularly women—are hit hardest by foreclosures.

Now the Michigan Democratic Party and the Obama campaign have filed suit to block using foreclosure lists to challenge voters in November. A lawsuit is okay, but what is even better is to carry out a nationwide, grassroots, militant campaign to stop all foreclosures and evictions. Campaigns in Michigan, Los Angeles and Boston are now underway to mobilize to win a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and evictions proposed in Michigan's SB 1306.

The right to housing, the right to political representation as well as the right to health care and a job are basic rights that must be defended and fought for in the streets all over the U.S. with Black, Latin@, other oppressed peoples and workers leading the way. □

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Letter to the editor

Palin, Alaska, Canada & Quebec

The news business has reported that Governor Palin's husband was a member of the Alaska Independence Party (AIP), and that Sarah Palin attended the AIP convention in 1994 and 2006. One plank of the AIP platform is the secession of Alaska from the U.S.; another is the annexation by Alaska of western Canada.

At first this may seem bizarre, but perhaps it is not. When the Quebec independence struggle became active in the 1970s, some Wall Street corporations and their political servants discussed annexation of some western Canadian provinces. In 1995, the year after Palin's first AIP convention, the Canadian Province of Quebec held its second referendum on independence for Quebec, which was

voted down by a razor-thin margin. And Governor Palin's chief achievement to her corporate sponsors was steamrolling through a natural gasoline pipeline from Alaska through western Canada. She even has been filmed at her church asking for prayers for this pipeline.

So the question is—if the Quebec people had voted for independence, would "pit-bull with lipstick" Palin and her ilk have tried to set up an "oil kingdom of the North" in Alaska and part of Canada? It seems that the same corporations that dragged the U.S. into the oil war in Iraq have many more schemes like that in their back pocket.

— Chris Fry
Delmar, N.Y.

Activists plan for

December Tijuana workers conference

By Bob McCubbin
Los Angeles

A large outpouring of workers and activists assembled at the Alvarado Street UNITE-HERE union hall in Los Angeles for a meeting and discussion to prepare for the fifth annual international labor conference on Dec. 5-7 in Tijuana, Mexico. The Sept. 9 meeting was sponsored by UNITE-HERE WSRJB, the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and the International Action Center. The Los Angeles-based Latino Movement USA also participated with a large contingent of workers.

Cristina Vasquez, regional director of UNITE-HERE, hosted the meeting. She welcomed the gathering and explained the importance of the conference in providing an opportunity for workers from different countries to learn from each other's struggles.

Ignacio Meneses, of the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange and the United Autoworkers Union, provided an in-depth analysis of the neoliberal system of exploitation that is being used by the imperialist powers to rob workers around the world of the wealth that their labor creates. The advocates of neoliberalism, he explained, argue that governments are inept and therefore everything needs to be privatized. These pro-exploitation promoters also demand that there be no regulation of the capitalist plunderers.

Meneses also outlined the general organization of the December conference, urging everyone to attend the Dec. 5 dinner where the heroic Cuban Five, all presently confined to U.S. federal prisons, and their families will be honored. Some of these family members will be present at the conference.

The conference discussions will be led by labor representatives from Cuba, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Colombia, Haiti, the Philippines, Mexico and the U.S.

On Dec. 6, among the topics will be relations between the U.S. and Cuba, Venezuela, Mexico and the rest of Latin America. Speakers will address the U.S. blockade of Cuba, the threats to the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela, Bolivia and the imposition of neoliberal policies on Mexico.

A panel will focus on ALBA, a trade



WW PHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

Cristina Vasquez, John Parker and Ignacio Meneses speak on Tijuana conference.

consortium led by Cuba and Venezuela based on cooperation and solidarity, as a growing alternative to the imperialist Free Trade Act of the Americas, which has had a devastating impact on workers and the poor throughout Latin America. The panel will also discuss the continuing efforts of transnational corporations to penetrate Latin America, the development of collective solidarity among Latin American nations, the urgent problems facing these countries, and the role of the workers' movements in solving these problems.

The focus on Dec. 7 will be on Latin American immigration to the U.S. and the growing threats to immigrant workers. Immigrant rights activists will present plans for pro-immigrant demonstrations throughout the U.S. on May 1, 2009.

Following Meneses, the next speaker was John Parker, a West Coast leader of the struggle against foreclosures. Parker explained how the U.S. housing crisis has global implications and announced two upcoming actions to press the California state government for a moratorium on foreclosures.

A lively discussion of how to build the Tijuana conference followed. Those making comments included Rosie Martinez, executive board member of SEIU 721; Alejandro Ahumada of the Utility Workers Local 132; Juan Jose Gutierrez of the Latino Movement U.S.A.; Rosemary Lee of the United Teachers of Los Angeles; and Juan Flores, a UNITE-HERE organizer. Cuba solidarity activist Walter Lippmann gave an up-to-the-minute report on the situation in Cuba following Hurricane Ike. An outreach committee was formed to spread word about the conference and encourage attendance from workers and pro-labor activists in Los Angeles and San Diego.

For a more detailed outline of the conference program, with information on conference and hotel registration, visit laborexchange.blogspot.com. □

BOLIVIA

Facing fascist attack, Morales fights back

By John Catalinotto

The struggle between U.S. imperialism on one side and the movement for sovereignty and self-determination for the countries of Latin America on the other reached a new stage in early September with use of paramilitary force against the popular Evo Morales government in Bolivia. This escalation has already led to more than 30 deaths, the expulsion of two U.S. ambassadors and an emergency meeting of Latin America heads of state in Chile.

Some voices warn that the civil war that had been brewing in Bolivia has now begun. Venezuela's President Hugo Chávez sounded a clarion call throughout Latin America by pointing to the intervention of U.S. imperialism and comparing the latest events to the Sept. 11, 1973, bloody overthrow of Salvador Allende in Chile.

The progressive Bolivian president and his MAS (Movement for Socialism) party can use every bit of support Bolivia can get from its neighbors and from solidarity movements worldwide. Yet the current situation is far from lost. The Bolivian armed forces are not yet lined up with the counterrevolution. There is also potential that the mostly Indigenous Bolivian masses, who just voted landslide support for the Morales government in a recall referendum, will mobilize to defend the government and a unified Bolivia.

Called together by Chávez, eight of the 12 heads of state of UNASUR met in Santiago, Chile, on Sept. 15. Morales said he had come "to explain to the presidents of South America the civic coup d'état by governors in some Bolivian states in recent days. We've seen looting, the ransacking of institutions, attempts to assault the police and the armed forces," he said. (BBC, Sept. 15) Reminiscent of the oil

sabotage in Venezuela in 2002 meant to disrupt the country's main economy, gas pipelines were also vandalized, temporarily cutting the flow of gas to Brazil and Argentina.

Not only Venezuela and Ecuador, but even those states considered "moderate" like Chile and Brazil, signed the statement supporting Morales, promising to refuse cooperation with any coup regime and condemning the paramilitary violence organized by the rightwing in Bolivia.

Massacre in Pando

Pando, Santa Cruz, Beni and Tarija are the names of the four departments or states that make up Bolivia's reactionary "Media-Luna" region—so named because the states' combined territory looks like a half moon. This mineral- and energy-rich region is still dominated by European-origin oligarchs and backed by U.S. imperialism.

Pando's prefect (governor) hired a gang of paramilitary criminals—some reports say from Brazil—who opened fire on a gathering of mostly Indigenous peasants on Sept. 11. As many as 30 people, all unarmed peasants, were killed near the capital city of Cobija. (BBC) This massacre was the most blatant crime in a series of attacks on buildings housing offices of the central government and popular organizations.

It is obvious why U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg, a State Department professional, was chosen for the job in Bolivia. His credentials include overseeing the divide-and-conquer strategy that used the Kosovo people of Albanian origin to help U.S. imperialism break up socialist Yugoslavia.

Thus it should be no surprise that Morales's first step in self-defense was to declare this imperialist agent "persona

non-grata" and expel him. In solidarity with Morales, Chávez expelled the U.S. ambassador from Venezuela. Even Honduras refused to recognize the credentials of a new U.S. ambassador presented there.

Note that the Republican and Democratic Party presidential candidates both made comments hostile to Morales' quite legitimate act of self-defense—expelling the key figure of an international conspiracy against his government.

The MAS government also declared a "state of siege" in Pando. The federal armed forces seized the airport at Cobija and began to patrol the streets. Pando's prefect, Leopoldo Fernandez, was detained by the Bolivian armed forces on Tuesday morning. Earlier, Chávez had criticized Bolivia's Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief General Luis Trigo for not acting more decisively against the fascist elements.

Counterrevolution spurs on revolution

According to a Sept. 15 article by a leader of the Communist Party of Bolivia, Marcos Domich: "It can be heard in some military circles that the measures taken were applied quite slowly and without resolve. This was perceived immediately by the population and caused a great popular agitation.

"Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, in diverse assemblies and meetings, mainly of the departments of the Center and the West, almost in a spontaneous way have begun to discuss the organization of detachments, brigades or other formations with one object in mind: to prepare to defend Bolivia's national integrity, democracy and sovereignty, in order to continue with the process of pro-

gressive change. The main element in this social spirit is patriotism."

Washington then demanded that the Morales government negotiate a "compromise" with the secessionists in the Media Luna. This is after these oligarchs and fascist elements were trashed in a national referendum—Morales got over 67 percent of the vote—and began resorting to fascist-like violence. Moreover, these criminals have no popular or moral standing in Bolivia or throughout Latin America. Nevertheless, Vice-President Alvaro Garcia has begun talks with Tarija prefect Mario Cossio who represents the Media Luna oligarchy.

Along with condemnation from Latin American governments, the attack on Morales and the MAS has awakened popular outrage. In Argentina, some 10,000 people, many of them Bolivian immigrants, marched on Sept. 12 on the U.S. Embassy in the Palermo section of Buenos Aires to back Morales, denounce the coup attempt and insist that the U.S. not intervene in Bolivia.

From the U.S. solidarity movement, a Sept. 14 International Action Center statement supported Morales and the MAS government. It reads in part: "We support Bolivia's declaration of the U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg as a persona non grata, and we protest U.S. involvement in Bolivia and its efforts to undermine and subvert the process of change in Bolivia that will benefit the sectors of its population that have been most oppressed, the Indigenous and Afro-Bolivian peoples.

"We support Bolivia's demand that... the U.S. stop its aid to the racist and neo-fascist secessionist movement of the eastern departments that are rich in resources that all Bolivian people own and should benefit from." (www.iacenter.org) □

U.S., worldwide actions: *'FREE THE FIVE!'*

By Cheryl LaBash
Washington, D.C.

On Sept. 12 and 13 around the world and particularly in Washington, D.C., voices rang out demanding freedom for the Cuban Five. On the tenth anniversary of their unjust arrests, the protests also condemned the U.S. government's double standard that imprisons these five Cuban heroes for non-violent, anti-terrorist acts, but gives a get-out-of-jail-free card to a self-admitted and convicted terror bomber, Luis Posada Carriles, who walks freely in Miami today.

In Washington, loud chants from a spirited march attracted many interested bystanders who learned about the Cuban Five from leaflets and conversation. Marching through the Latin@ immigrant neighborhood of Adams-Morgan, past the Washington Post newspaper offices, the shouts and noisemakers were just as loud when the sun-scorched marchers arrived at the White House.

An indoor rally at the SEIU union hall followed the march. There Attorney Leonard Weinglass reviewed the remarkable history of injustice in the case of the Cuban Five that went from Miami to Atlanta courts and now is headed to the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C. An appeal will be filed before Dec. 1 asserting the unfairness of the Five's trial in Miami, which a three-judge panel unanimously called "a perfect storm of preju-



dice," and overturned the convictions.

Gloria LaRiva, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Five, stressed the Cuban Five must become known to everyone in the Washington, D.C., area as the appeal process moves into its final phase. On Sept. 12, she and four others, representing each of the Cuban Five, committed civil disobedience at the White House and were arrested. They attempted to deliver more than 102,000 petition signatures demanding freedom for the Five.

Recent hurricanes over Cuba caused the evacuation of nearly three million people. Cuban Ambassador Jorge Alberto Bolanos Suárez stated that although the hurricane devastated Cuba, it didn't destroy the will and decision of the Cuban people to go forward. In the middle of the crisis the revolutionary people of Cuba sent food and doctors to Haiti. Bolanos explained, "We are lacking food and everything, but they are lacking more than us."



PHOTOS: DEREK GRIGSBY

Washington, D.C., Sept. 13.

Rev. Lucius Walker, founder of Pastors for Peace, announced a special hurricane reconstruction caravan to Cuba that will travel via Buffalo through Canada. Akbar Muhammad, international representative of the Nation of Islam, suggested reaching the Black and Latin@ communities that are the natural allies of the Cuban revolution through targeted media ads and a comic book style story of the Cuban Five.

On behalf of all five heroes, including Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, René González and Ramón Labañino, a written statement from Ramón Labañino said: "The biggest victory for all these years has been the strength and unity, the constant denunciation against terrorism and against war, while the greatest virtue has been the love that drives all our actions and the existence of each of you. With both, with the irrefutable truth of our cause, we will continue this battle until the final victory, convinced that—¡Venceremos! (We will win!)"

A "Five Stars, One Song Concert" for the Five in the Bronx, N.Y., on Sept. 13 was publicized with a full-page ad in the Spanish language daily El Diario/La Prensa. The San Francisco city and county governments declared Sept. 12 Free the Five Day.

A meeting for the Cuban Five was held in Miami on Sept. 14 without being attacked. More than 300 international solidarity groups are actively organizing support for the Cuban Five. Public events and newspaper articles demanded freedom for our five brothers from Kenya to Malaysia and from Canada to Chile.

In Lebanon, Samir Kantar, imprisoned for thirty years in the dungeons of Israel and who was released last July thanks to successful negotiations carried out by Hezbollah, led a demonstration at the U.S. embassy in Beirut where activists were arrested. (www.antiterroristas.cu) Demonstrations will continue throughout the month of solidarity with the Cuban Five, from Sept. 12 through Oct. 8. □

Carta abierta a Barack Obama

El simbolismo en si no con llevará cambio alguno

He seguido con gran interés y con esperanzas renovadas su campaña electoral que ha movilizado a millones de american@s con su mensaje por el cambio de un sistema político que sirve a una pequeña élite económica a costo de los pueblos de los EEUU y del mundo. Su elección como presidente de los EEUU, donde esclav@s e indi@s fueron por mucho tiempo considerados menos que seres humanos bajo la ley, sin duda constituirá un momento histórico en las relaciones entre las razas en los Estados Unidos.

Sin embargo, el simbolismo en si no conlleva cambio alguno. Nuestra juventud, negra y nativa por igual, sufre por la brutalidad policiaca y el este-reotipado racista, por las escuelas sin adecuados recursos, y por la discriminación en el empleo y en las viviendas. Sinceramente espero que su campaña electoral inspire esperanza entre nuestros jóvenes para que luchan por un futuro mejor. Sin embargo, estoy preocupado por sus recientes declaraciones sobre el veredicto del caso de Sean Bell, en el cual los oficiales de la policía de Nueva York que dispararon 50 veces a un hombre joven la noche antes de su boda, fueron encontrados no culpables de las acusaciones criminales, demuestra una visión miope de la ley. Hasta que la ley no esté utilizada para proteger a las víctimas de la violencia estatal y del racismo, servirá como un instrumento de represión, igual que los códigos esclavistas funcionaron para mantener y legitimar una institución inhumana.

Como usted tal vez sepa, yo he llevado ya más de tres décadas de mi vida como preso político del gobierno federal por un crimen que no cometí. He servido más tiempo que la sentencia máxima bajo las pautas judiciales bajo las cuales fui sentenciado. Y a pesar de esto, continuamente rehúsan liberarme bajo palabra (en las raras ocasiones en que me ofrecen una audiencia), porque no acepto confesar falsamente.

Amnistía Internacional, el Dalai Lama del Tibet, mi hermana guatemalteca Rigoberta Menchú, y muchos otros de sus amigos y simpatizantes me han reconocido como preso político y han llamado por mi libertad inmediata. Millones de personas por todo el mundo me ven como símbolo de la injusticia contra los pueblos indígenas de este país, y no dudo que la historia me recordará como uno de una multitud de víctimas de la represión del gobierno estadounidense, igual que Sacco y Vanzetti, los mártires de la Plaza Haymarket, Eugene Debs, Bill Haywood, y otros que fueron blanco (de represión) por sus ideas políticas. Pero ni yo ni mi pueblo podemos darnos el lujo de esperar hasta que la historia rectifique los crímenes del pasado.

Como miembro del Movimiento Indígena Americano (AIM), llegué a la reservación Oglala de Pine Ridge para defender allí al pueblo tradicional, de

violaciones de sus derechos humanos llevadas a cabo por la policía tribal y escuadrones de matones respaldados por el FBI y la administración del gobierno federal. Nuestra ocupación simbólica de Wounded Knee en 1973 inspiró a los pueblos indígenas por todas las Américas a luchar por su libertad y por los derechos de los tratados, pero también fue encontrada por un feroz bloqueo federal y una violenta ola de represión en Pine Ridge.

En 1974, el líder de AIM Russell Means, hizo campaña para ser electo presidente tribal mientras que estaba sometido a juicio por el gobierno federal por su rol en Wounded Knee. Aunque Means estaba excluido de la reservación por decreto del régimen del cliente de los Estados Unidos Richard Wilson, ganó los votos populares pero se le negó el oficio por medio de un fraude extensivo de votos y por el control de los mecanismos electorales. Los matones de Wilson dispararon a pueblos que apoyaron a Means como Wanblee y amenazaron a simpatizantes tradicionales por toda la reservación, acciones que resultaron en la muerte de por lo menos 60 personas entre 1973 y 1975.

Ya es más que hora para hacer una investigación por el Congreso que examine el grado de complicidad federal en la violenta contra insurrección que siguió a la ocupación de Wounded Knee. La trágica balacera que resultó en la muerte de dos agentes del FBI y un hombre indígena, resultó también no solamente en mi convicción falsa sino también en la terminación del Comité Church que estaba investigando los abusos por agentes federales de espionaje y la policía, antes de que pudiera celebrar audiencias sobre la infiltración del AIM por el FBI. A pesar de décadas de intentos por mis abogados de conseguir documentos del gobierno que tienen que ver con mi caso, el FBI continúa reteniendo miles de documentos que posiblemente pudieran exonerarme o revelar evidencia de colusión judicial con la fiscalía.

Creo verdaderamente que la verdad me liberará, pero también significará una ruptura simbólica con la guerra no declarada de los Estados Unidos contra los pueblos indígenas. Espero y rezo que usted tenga la valentía y la integridad para buscar la verdad; y que tenga la sabiduría para reconocer el derecho inherente de todos los pueblos oprimidos a su autodeterminación, como fue reconocido por la Declaración de la ONU sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas. Aunque sus comentarios sobre la política federal indígena parecen prometedores, su visión de “una sola América” tiene una señal ominosa para los pueblos indígenas que están luchando por definir sus propias visiones nacionales. Liberadas de imposiciones coloniales e intervención externa, las naciones indígenas pudieran servir como modelos de la libertad y la democracia a las que aspiran los Estados Unidos.

En la lucha,

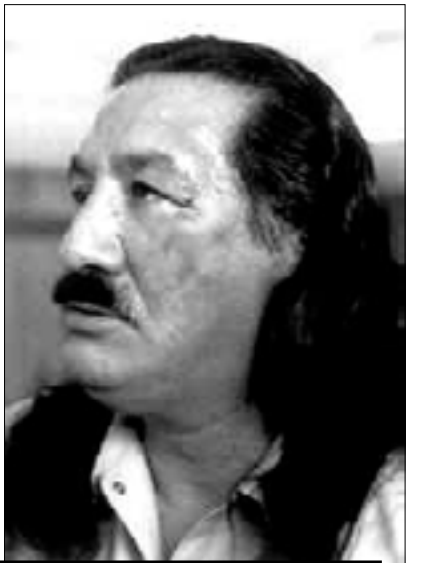
**Hasta que sea ganada la libertad,
—Leonard Peltier**

#89637-132 U.S.P.

Lewisburg, P.O. Box 1000,

Lewisburg, PA, EEUU 17837

28 de agosto



Libertad para Leonard Pelter.

27.000 maquinistas en huelga en la Boeing

**Por Jim McMahan
Seattle**

L@s combativ@s maquinistas (“Fighting Machinists”) salieron en huelga contra la Boeing a las 12:01 a.m. el 6 de septiembre e inmediatamente establecieron líneas de piquete. La producción de las órdenes retrasadas de aviones valorizada en \$275 mil millones cesó. El 3 de septiembre, el sindicato, la Asociación Internacional de Maquinistas y Trabajadores Aeroespaciales (IAM por las siglas en inglés) había rechazado el “mejor y final” ultimátum contractual por un 80 por ciento de votos seguido por un voto de un 87 por ciento a favor de la huelga.

Como resultado, 27.000 maquinistas están de huelga en las facilidades de Kansas, Oregon y en el estado de Washington; 25.000 de ell@s trabajan en plantas de Seattle y Tacoma.

El ímpetu para la huelga aumentó considerablemente después de contados los votos. En ese momento, el negociador en jefe de los maquinistas, Mark Blondin, anunció que acababa de recibir una llamada del mediador federal y del gobernador de Washington, Chris Gregoir diciéndole que Boeing quería volver a la mesa de negociaciones. Los líderes del sindicato entonces pospusieron la huelga por 48 horas dándole otra oportunidad a la Boeing. Pero la Boeing en verdad no quería negociar. Sólo quería romper el ímpetu de la huelga e intentar destruir la unidad entre l@s huelguistas.

L@s maquinistas en el auditorio estaban rabios@s con esta disrupción. Habían estado preparándose para la huelga durante seis semanas. Denunciaron fuertemente a los jefes sindicales Blondin y Tom Wroblewski, este último siendo el presidente de distrito.

Como la Boeing y el mediador querían reunirse con Tom Buffenbarger, presidente internacional del sindicato, trasladaron las negociaciones a Orlando en Florida, lejos de l@s trabajador@s, quienes en una demostración de fuerza habían estado marchando en las plantas y llevando a cabo mítines en las afueras de la planta. En la planta de Everett 7.000 trabajador@s marcharon durante el día, y l@s trabajador@s del turno nocturno hicieron lo mismo. L@s trabajador@s también marcharon hacia el edificio del sindicato.

El intento de Boeing de ahogar el entusiasmo de l@s trabajador@s falló. Los negociadores por el sindicato salieron temprano de la mesa de negociación sin ningún acuerdo, comenzando así la huelga.

La huelga de l@s maquinistas ocurre después de un diluvio de despidos y recortes por parte de la Boeing a pesar de que recientemente venía empleando a nuev@s trabajador@s para cumplir con un retraso en la producción de 3.600 aviones.

A finales de los años 90 y principios de esta década, solamente en Seattle más de 50.000 trabajador@s fueron despedid@s. Estos despidos no fueron causados por una recesión económica. La intención fue la de eliminar permanentemente estos puestos de trabajo para luego depender en la subcontratación. Los trabajos de fabricar partes para los aviones de la Boeing han sido subcontratados alrededor del mundo, incluyendo talleres no sindicalizados en el mismo Seattle. Mientras tanto, la Boeing ha ganado una fortuna, \$13 mil millones, en ganancias durante los últimos 5 años.

L@s maquinistas quieren poner un alto a la subcontratación. Quieren acabar con el uso de contratistas para entregar los repuestos que vienen de compañías privadas directamente a las fábricas de Boeing, trabajo que anteriormente era hecho por maquinistas miembr@s del sindicato. Con frecuencia, l@s trabajador@s dicen, “El dinero no importa si no se tiene un empleo”. La movilización de la huelga por l@s maquinistas ya ha parado a la Boeing de subcontratar los trabajos de mantenimiento. Poner un alto a la subcontratación y obtener trabajos sindicalizados con buenos salarios es algo por lo que tod@s l@s trabajador@s luchan.

L@s huelguistas también quieren un mejor salario. Los medios corporativos de comunicación siempre proclaman que l@s maquinistas ganan más de \$20 la hora, pero más de 5.000 ganan menos que eso. La estación de televisión King5 de Seattle entrevistó a una mujer maquinista madre de dos hijos que protestaba y que está ganando \$13,95 la hora después de un año en el trabajo. Mientras que l@s maquinistas hasta la fecha han ganado un incremento salarial de \$2,28 la hora, tod@s l@s recién emplead@s han recibido muy poco o ningún aumento. Como resultado de desigualdades como estas, l@s trabajador@s jóvenes están uniéndose a l@s trabajador@s mayores con experiencia sindical y volviéndose más militantes.

L@s maquinistas están muy unid@s y much@s dicen que están list@s para seguir fuera por tres meses más. Superaron un gran obstáculo con la demora de la huelga por 48 horas. Ahora quieren lograr avances verdaderos para el movimiento sindical en este país. Dicen, “¡Es nuestro momento! ¡Este es el tiempo!” □